

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise today with Representatives POE, FILNER, and BONO to offer an amendment prohibiting the Federal Aviation Administration from eliminating, consolidating, colocating, or planning to consolidate or colocate any terminal radar approach control center, or TRACON.

Our amendment is virtually identical to the amendment that was overwhelmingly approved by the House in a bipartisan fashion by almost 100 votes just last June. Yet, since the House went on record of opposing further consolidation, the FAA has done virtually nothing to address our concerns. Even more, it has accelerated its consolidation efforts while shutting out stakeholders from the process.

Mr. Chairman, the TRACON system guides airplanes within a 50-mile radius of the airport on their takeoffs and final approaches. The FAA has embarked on an ambitious consolidation and colocation plan which will significantly limit our air traffic capacities in the future. I warn that this policy is shortsighted.

It is now rumored that the FAA's current consolidation proposal seeks to eliminate or consolidate nearly 50 TRACONs in over 30 States across the United States.

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In some instances, entire States will be left without any approach radar system within their borders. In other instances, consolidation runs the risk of placing undue stress on nearby TRACONs already having to deal with larger airspaces and staffing shortfalls.

In Florida, the FAA is planning to consolidate the TRACONs of Miami International, Ft. Lauderdale International and Palm Beach International airports into one TRACON. Note that all three of these airports are within a Federal high-risk urban area, and smack dab in the heart of Hurricane Alley.

Once this plan is implemented, if a terrorist attack or natural disaster were to strike the Miami TRACON, then all three international airports would lose their approach radar system. Controllers in Jacksonville, an airport more than 350 miles away, will be forced to direct approaching aircraft throughout virtually the entire State.

Realize, Mr. Chairman, this is not a question of whether or not consolidation can technologically be done. It can be done and it is being done. On the contrary, this is a question of should it be done and what risk is Congress willing to run.

Further, in the instances where consensus is possible and consolidation could be appropriate, the FAA is still

refusing to involve stakeholders in the process. To that end, this amendment appropriately exempts the TRACONs of Palm Springs and southern California from the limitation.

Opponents of our amendment likely will argue that the construction of some new control facilities, including one in my district, will be delayed and funds lost if we do not allow consolidation. To them I say, why can't we keep those funds available until all stakeholders can reach a viable solution? Congress does it all the time.

Some point to the FAA authorization bill as the appropriate place to address this issue. And I have great respect for the chairman of that committee with whom I've had a conversation. If that's the case, though, why do we keep throwing money at the problem in this bill? At the very least, we should tie this money to smart policy and a transparent process.

The FAA's TRACON consolidation runs the grave risk of leaving our air traffic system vulnerable during critical times and setting a dangerous precedent for a process that excludes stakeholders from decisions that impact their lives. This is not a risk that Congress should be willing to take.

I urge my colleagues to support this important amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I claim time in opposition to this amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, the major problem, other than lack of funds, related to aviation in this country for the next period of time is the great growth in traffic. We are expecting total traffic to pass 1 billion passengers within the next 10 years. Over the last 10 years it has risen from, gone well above 500 million passengers per year.

Now, this amendment will make the cost of providing facilities and equipment in order to be able to meet that great growth in traffic much higher than it otherwise would be. The modern equipment that is necessary, most of the present towers need to be upgraded, the equipment needs to be upgraded, towers need to be built for the next generation of air traffic control to deal with all of that huge increase in expected traffic. The towers themselves are expensive. The electronic equipment, the facilities, what you call the STARS systems for control, all of these are expensive items, and the expense of the process burgeons if we do not make other kinds of efficiencies.

Now, this amendment would halt all of the modernization of air traffic control facilities, both TRACONs and towers, and the equipment within those facilities. Consolidation has already gone on very successfully in some parts of the country.

The gentleman from Florida has suggested that there are problems in safe-

ty, potential problems in safety. Look, in California they have consolidated to now two TRACONs covering the whole State for the 30-plus million people in California and the roughly 40 commercial air systems, airports that are there. So that kind of consolidation has gone on also in New York, also in Chicago, also in Atlanta, in all of those places, some of the most complicated air traffic systems in the country. The most complicated ones have already been undergoing consolidations, and this proposal would stop that process.

It would cost us \$85 million in savings from planned and designed and in construction consolidations that are already in process. It would cost another \$110 million in funds which would expire, because funds for FAA facilities and equipment goes on a 3-year cycle.

In addition, there would be \$225 million in construction funds that will be placed on hold. It is an extremely costly endeavor, and it is generally wrong-headed, really. We have to have this consolidation because it's critical to the efficient dealing with our movement of air traffic in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR).

Mr. OBERSTAR. Without a great deal of enthusiasm, I oppose the amendment of the gentleman, although I supported it last year. But this year we have in place in our FAA reauthorization bill a process that will cure the problem the gentleman has brought to the House floor.

Frankly, the FAA has not been responsive to the gentleman from Florida. Worse, they have been dismissive. They have not consulted with him or with his airport or with the community that he represents.

In the legislation that the gentleman from Illinois, chairman of the subcommittee and I have fashioned with bipartisan support, we have a process in place. Once our authorization bill is enacted, that will require the FAA to consult with communities, with airport authorities, with the Members of Congress on these consolidation proposals and report back to the Congress. We'll get another crack at it. We'll do it in due course and due appropriate process, not the way FAA is proposing to do it, certainly not with a base-closing commission approach that the administration offered to the Congress.

Just today the gentleman from Illinois held a hearing on the wretched conditions in a great many of our air traffic control facilities, which the FAA is ignoring under the guise of modernization of air traffic control system.

Well, come on. That's not happening for another 5 to 10 years. Meanwhile, people have to sit there and suffer through mold and rain and mildew and, in northern Minnesota, in my district in Duluth, snow coming through the windows, or flies in the air traffic control tower in the winter. Come on. That's not taking care of our facilities.